

Unemployment Insurance

UNEMPLOYED MINERS

SITUATION IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NOVA
SCOTIA—CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY
ORDERS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. CLARENCE GILLIS (Cape Breton South): May I be permitted to direct a question to the Minister of Public Works and Transport (Mr. Cardin) arising out of a telegram I received yesterday from Mr. Silby Barrett, international board member of district No. 26, United Mine Workers of America, setting out that 450 miners in the River Herbert and Joggins district, Cumberland county, Nova Scotia, are working only two days a week, due to lack of orders for coal. I understand that a copy of this telegram was sent to the minister. Orders for coal to that section come largely from the Canadian National Railways. Is the department familiar with the situation as described in the telegram, and if so, can any action be taken for the purpose of alleviating distress in that particular district?

Hon. P. J. A. CARDIN (Minister of Public Works and Transport): I have not seen the telegram to which the hon. member refers, but I shall see the officers of the department in about half an hour and I will look into the question.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

FUND TO BE ADMINISTERED BY COMMISSION
ASSISTED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE—PROVISION
FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Hon. N. A. McLARTY (Minister of Labour) moved that the house go into committee on Bill No. 98, to establish an unemployment insurance commission to provide for insurance against unemployment, to establish an employment service, and for other purposes related thereto.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Vien in the chair.

On section 1—Short title.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Mr. Chairman, there seems to be the most indecent haste in getting this measure through parliament. I have no doubt that all of us are anxious to close the session, either by prorogation or by adjournment. But this measure, one of the most important to come before the house this session, was introduced only in the very late stages of the session. It had some discussion here in the resolution stage and at succeeding stages; then it was referred to a special committee, as suggested, for study. When the

[Mr. Casgrain.]

committee's report was presented yesterday afternoon the evidence had not been printed and was not available to hon. members, especially the evidence of certain independent witnesses, including Mr. Wolfenden, upon which I lay a good deal of stress. I received this evidence at three minutes to eleven this morning. I have had opportunity only to skim through, during the preliminary stages of this morning's session, some of the observations which Mr. Wolfenden made.

It cannot be said that this bill has had adequate study by the membership of this house, whatever may have been the time devoted to it in the committee, and I understand there was considerable discussion there; the evidence which has finally reached us is indicative of that. But certainly there has not been time to study the evidence which was taken before the special committee.

The government is bound to put the measure through now, and I am not going to take the responsibility of holding it up. But I do say this, and I want it to reach the country, that this house is not given adequate time to discuss it, and members have not had opportunity to study the suggestions and the contribution which was made by Mr. Wolfenden, whom I regard as perhaps the outstanding authority in Canada in this field.

Let me, however, take the opportunity while I am speaking from this place to put on the record certain correspondence between the chief commissioner under the 1935 employment and social insurance commission and the Prime Minister.

It will be recalled that under the 1935 act Mr. Harrington was appointed chief commissioner, Mr. Tom Moore was appointed as representative of labour, and a gentleman from the province of Quebec was appointed as representing employers. The act was given royal assent, and the commission was set up. An election followed and the government of the day was defeated. The attitude of the Prime Minister and the gentlemen supporting him was that the act was unconstitutional. The decision of the courts has confirmed them in that view, and I am not going to review it or traverse the issue at all. But I do desire to lay before the house the correspondence to which I refer, which was directed after the election by the then chief commissioner to the Prime Minister; correspondence between one gentleman and another; correspondence which, I think, was treated with scant consideration by the Prime Minister. I shall leave the matter to the house to judge.

I may say that we asked for this correspondence through the ordinary channels, and I had hoped that it would be tabled before